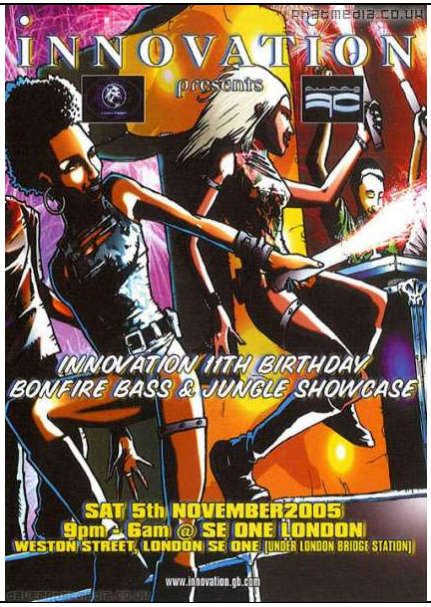
Around Two Bridges:

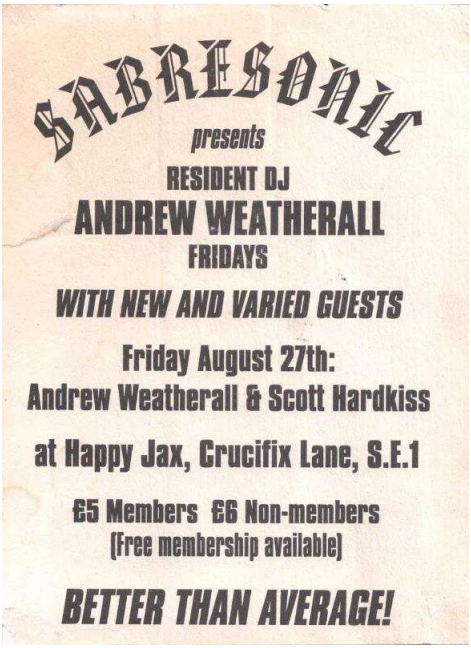
a cultural history tour around the Tooley Street area for Southwark LGBT Staff Network



Neil Gordon-Orr

Shand Street

Happy Jax nightclub was based in a railway arch on the corner of Shand Street and Crucifix Lane. Influential techno producer Andrew Weatherall put on his Sabresonic nights here in the early 1990s (flyer below from 1993)

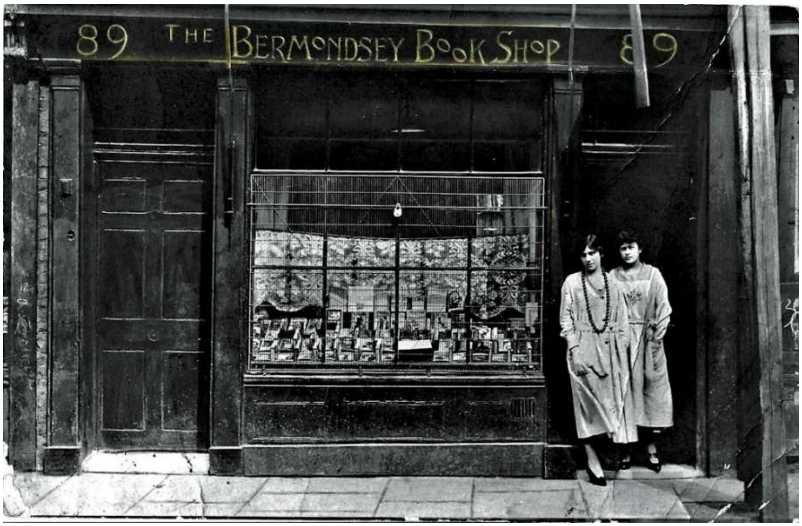


Bermondsey Street

Fashion designer Zandra Rhodes founded the Fashion & Textile Museum in 2003.

The Rolling Stones rented a basement rehearsal room at 47 Bermondsey St from 1968-73 (pictured there below). Pink Floyd and The Faces (with Rod Stewart) rehearsed there too.

Bermondsey Bookshop, 1920s



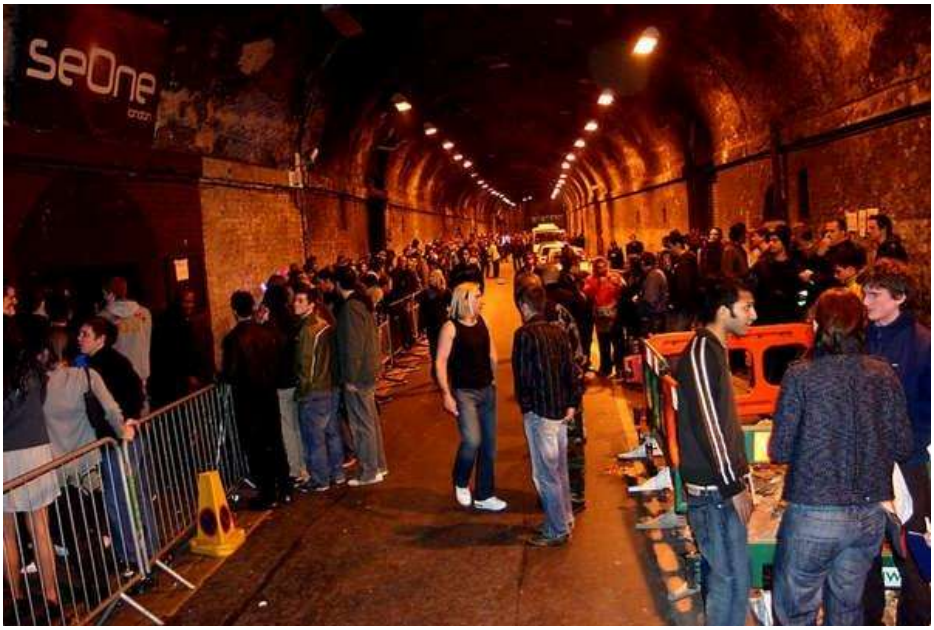
The Bermondsey Bookshop was founded by Ethel Gutman at 89 Bermondsey Street. There was a reading room and visiting lecturers. Virginia Woolf was among the writers who contributed to its journal ‘The Bermondsey Book’. Nearby in Morocco St, today’s Morocco Bound bookshop hosts events including LGBTQ+ poetry nights.

Clubs under London Bridge

Before the redevelopment of London Bridge station, complete in 2018, there was a labyrinth of road tunnels, vaults and arches underneath hosting various clubs. Cable Club was off Bermondsey Street tunnel from 2009-13 – this is a flyer for ‘Matinee’ gay club there.

EVOLVED EVENTS PRESENTS
Saturday 5th Dec '09
MATINEE
LONDON
La Noche Roja
Red Party
11PM -8AM @
cable
ONDON'S MASSIVE AWARD WINNING MONTHLY EVENT IS BACK WITH THE BIGGEST DJ LINE UP AND THE FIRST FULL-ON CLUB PRODUCTION TRANSFORMING CABLE INTO A GLAMOROUS AND SEXY RED PALACE !!
MATINEE ALL STAR DJ
LYDIA SANZ
PLUS EVOLVED EVENTS ALL STAR DJS
GUY WILLIAMS
PAUL HERON
PIER MOROCCO
BRENT NICHOLS
FAT TONY
ALESSANDRO
SAKI
JONNY M
LIMITED PRESALE AND VIP TICKET OUTLETS : OVO, PROWLER, CLONE ZONE, SOLARSTATION, BAR-CODE AND AT THE PRE PARTIES :
FRIDAY 4TH DECEMBER @ THE BOX BAR COVENT GARDEN - 8PM TILL 00.00AM
SATURDAY 5TH DECEMBER @ RUPERT STREET BAR - 8PM TILL 11PM
WATCH OUT FOR ROMANO AND THE MATINEE BOYS IN SOHO ALL WEEK FOR LIMITED MATINEE LONDON PROMO CDS VOL 2 MIXED BY PAUL HERON
MATINEE,SATURDAY 05TH DECEMBER 2009,
11PM TILL 8AM, CABLE CLUB, 33A BERMONDSEY STREET, LONDON,SE1 2EG
DESIGN@JANOWSKI.CO.UK

Weston Street tunnel - SeOne Club, 2002-2010



The SeOne club (2002-10), formerly The Drome, had capacity for 3,000 people and was known for large scale drum'n' bass nights

Joiner Street - Shunt Lounge, 2006-2010

The entrance to the Shunt Lounge was opposite the tube station on Joiner Street. The club space is now occupied by Marks and Spencers and other shops.

Road tunnels

The road tunnels under London Bridge, of which only Bermondsey Street remains, have featured in films and videos including Coldplay's 'Fix You' video in Weston Street, 2005.

….and The Specials, 'Ghost Town' (1981)

Shipwright Arms, Tooley Street

The Shipwright Arms was home to gay bar The Anvil from 1992 to 1997. As recalled by one regular, ‘The upstairs had a dark cruising area and I distinctly remember the biker nights which were held every Thursday evening’. It lost its licence after a police raid.

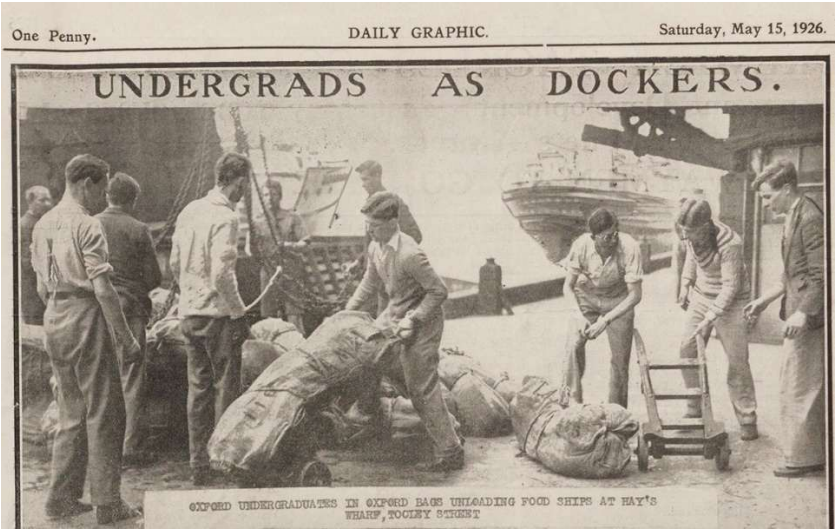
Tooley Street Hilton Hotel/Royal Oak

The Hilton Hotel stands on the site of the Royal Oak pub, an important soul club in the 1980s with DJs including Gilles Peterson (pictured there) and acid house pioneer Nicky Holloway

THE SPECIAL BRANCH 9 till 2
THE SPECIAL BRANCH 9 till 2
THE SPECIAL BRANCH 9 till 2
RAGE
2 FLOORS OF MUSIC
UPSTAIRS JAZZ & TROPICAL
DOWNSTAIRS SOUL, FUNK N GOGO
EVERY FRIDAY
UPSTAIRS L. DORADOE & GUESTS
26th CHRIS BROWN
10thBOB JONES
3rd GILES PETERSON
DOWNSTAIRS NICK HOLLOWAY & GUESTS
26th — PETE TONG
3rd — JEFF YOUNG
ADMISSION ONLY £2 BEFORE 10 WITH THIS LEAFLET
DETAILS ON 01-853 1953
EVERY MON — "SOUL" WITH BOB JONES 8-12
EVERY SAT
UPSTAIRS PAUL MURPHY
DOWNSTAIRS NICKY HOLLOWAY

Hays Wharf

Hays Wharf (now Galeria) was an important site in the heyday of the London docks, primarily used to import tea and foodstuffs. There were clashes between strikers and police here during the 1926 General Strike when Oxford students were brought in as strikebreakers to unload ships.



One Penny. DAILY GRAPHIC. Saturday, May 15, 1926.

UNDERGRADS AS DOCKERS.

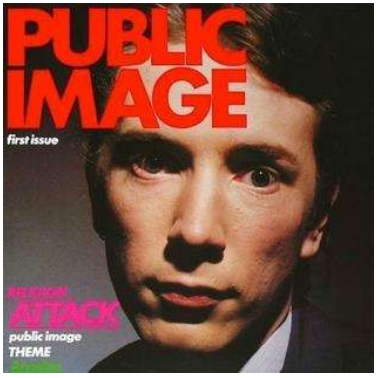
OXFORD UNDERGRADUATES IN OXFORD BAGS UNLOADING FOOD SHIPS AT HAY'S WHARF, TOOLEY STREET

Striking dockers in Tooley Street, 1958

Hays Wharf

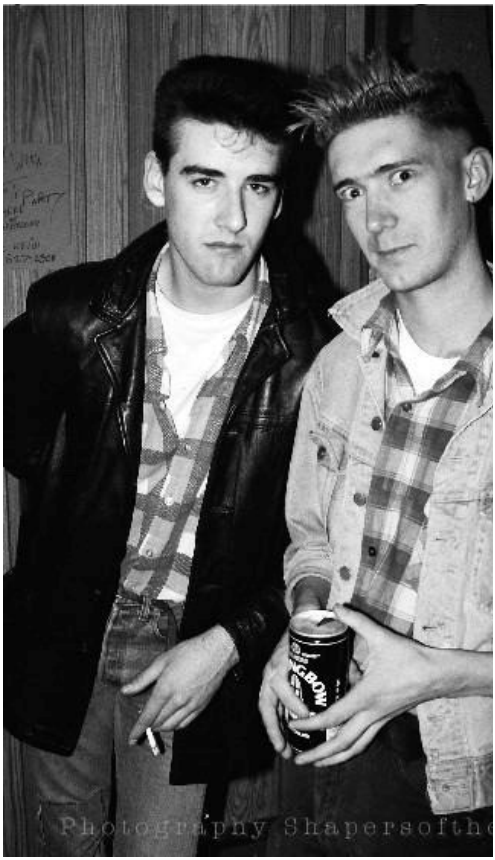
Hays Wharf closed as a working dock in 1970 and there was a long period of uncertainty about the site's future until it was redeveloped in the 1980s. There was an unsuccessful campaign to convert it to social housing including a 1981 protest on HMS Belfast calling for 'Homes not Offices' on Hays Wharf (Peter Tatchell was among those taking part).

#



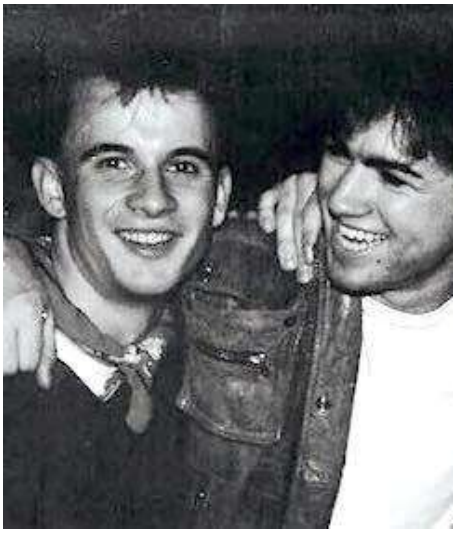
In the late 1970s part of Hays Wharf, at 75-81 Tooley Street, was used for Rollerball Rehearsal Studios.
John Lydon's Public Image Ltd were among the bands who rehearsed there.

Hays Wharf – Dirtbox warehouse party 1983



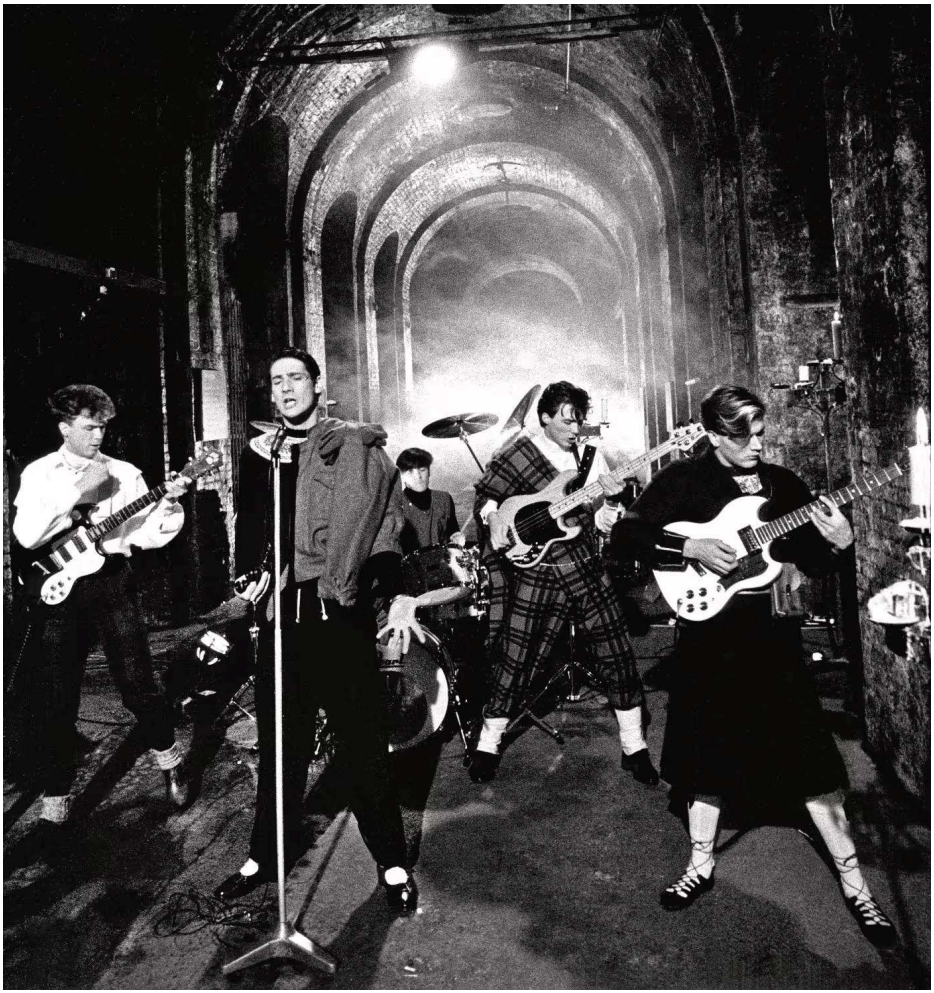
Hay's Wharf was one of the places used for the early 1980s 'Dirtbox' warehouse parties. Club promoters Phil & Rob on left.

George Michael at Tooley St Dirtbox party in 1983 (below)



Dirtbox also put on a party in Clink Street SE1. There were also LGBT warehouse parties known as 'The Lift' in this period, held at Studio Drive, Soho Wharf, Clink Street. A few years later, in 1988, the RIP nights in Clink Street were among the first acid house events in London.

London Dungeon



The London Dungeon was a horror-themed museum at 28-34 Tooley Street by London Bridge Station from 1974-2013. In 1980 the band Spandau Ballet, then starting out from the New Romantic/Blitz kids scene, filmed the video there for their first single ‘To cut a long story short’.

HMS Belfast - Spandau Ballet 1980

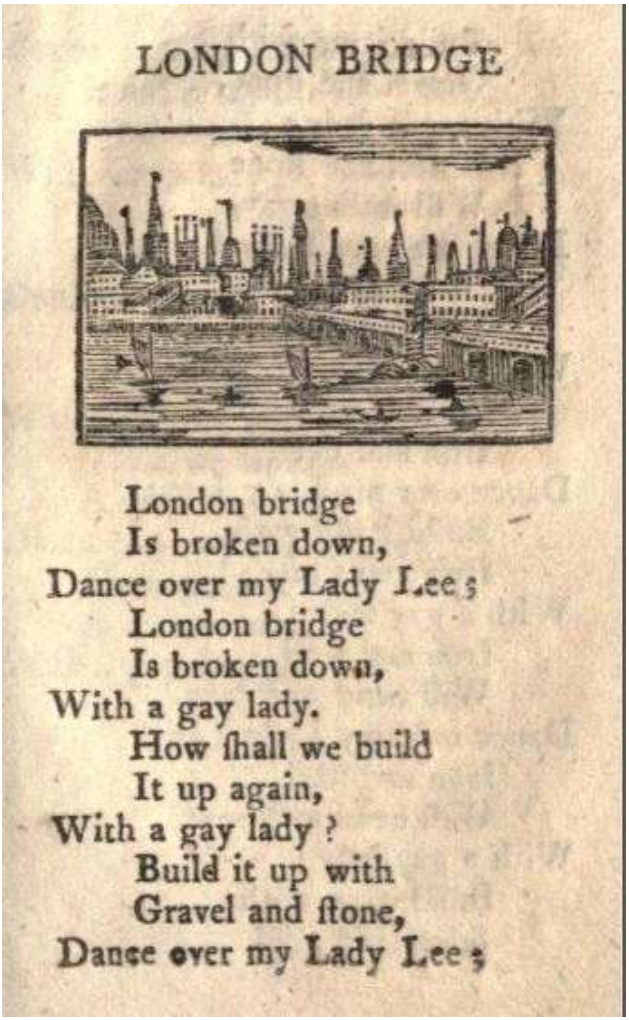
Spandau Ballet booked the HMS Belfast in 1980 for a supposed private graduation party. According to Steve Dagger, the band's manager: 'There were Elizabethan inspired crossdressers, there were Soul boys, Rockabillies, there were Fritz Lang futurists, there was Boy George, Marilyn, Phillip Salon in their prime and one man in a wedding dress with fairy lights who asked Graham if there was a plug socket he could use…. the fire eaters arrived and combined with his discovery of two men having sex in the engine room, it would be fair to say that our host went mental'

Pre-fame Boy George and Marilyn on HMS Belfast

HMS Belfast – Depeche Mode ‘People are People’ video (1984)

HMS Belfast – Kelly Marie ‘It feels like I’m in love’ video (1980)

London Bridge is broken down (18th century)



LONDON BRIDGE

London bridge
Is broken down,
Dance over my Lady Lee;
London bridge
Is broken down,
With a gay lady.
How ſhall we build
It up again,
With a gay lady?
Build it up with
Gravel and ſtone,
Dance over my Lady Lee;

Surely more songs have been written mentioning London Bridge than any other landmark. Songs which refer to it have been recorded by Marianne Faithful, Joni Mitchell, Dolly Parton, The Clash, Big Audio Dynamite, Wu Tang Clan, The Streets, Elliot Smith, Chumbawamba and many more. Even if some them got it mixed up with Tower Bridge! (looking at you Fergie).

Tower Bridge

Tower Bridge features in many films and videos including Katrina and the Waves ‘Walking on Sunshine’ (1980).

Lalit London, Tooley Street

The hotel/restaurant is run by the Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, an Indian company led by Keshav Suri. He has been a prominent Indian LGBTQ+ activist. In 2017 Suri and others filed a petition in the Supreme Court of India to repeal Section 377 of the Penal Code which prohibited sex between men. In 2018 the high court unanimously struck down this colonial era law – effectively decriminalizing male homosexuality. Suri also runs a chain of LGBTQ-friendly Kitty Su nightclubs in India.

The Lalit Hotel occupies the site of the former St Olaves Grammar school. Folk singer Martin Carthy went to school there in 1950s. Nearby was St Olaves Public Library where George Orwell wrote parts of Down and Out in Paris and London (1933).

Butlers Wharf

During the 1970s the former dockside buildings in Butlers Wharf/Shad Thames were abandoned and semi-derelict and became home for a while for a community of artists. A 1979 fire forced many to move out before the site was redeveloped.

Performance artist Anne Bean (aka Anne Archy) had one of the studios at Butlers Wharf. In 1977 a performance saw her swimming in the Thames under Tower Bridge with lights attached to her ankles while collaborator Paul Burwell drummed in a rowing boat.

Anne Bean also formed an art band, variously known as Moody and the Menstruators and The Moodies.

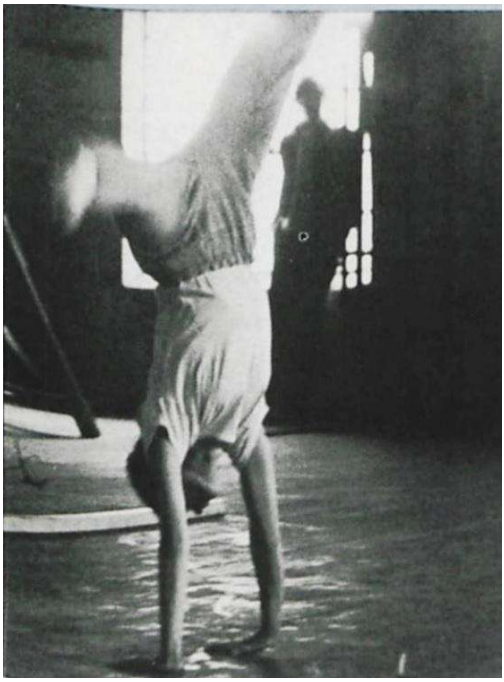
The Moodies - a group of art students who started to parody the current obsession with nostalgia, then found themselves being taken seriously
Report by Meriel McCooey; photographs by Hans Feurer

Butlers Wharf: X6 Dance Company (1976-80)

X6 Dance Space was in Butlers Wharf, founded by a radical dance company exploring gender and sexuality.

As a woman you are taught to deny your creativity, intellect and sexuality to conform to an exact, predetermined image. Severe dieting, for example, was common amongst ballet dancers–ballet teachers would approach pupils in class and whisper instructions to diet. There were many casualties, in some cases leading to total anorexia. We struggled to conform. The ideal was a kind of asexual femininity; and while men were allowed to be androgynous and homosexual, lesbianism was considered abhorrent, and to contradict the essential femininity.

XR interviewed in Spare Rib (1977)

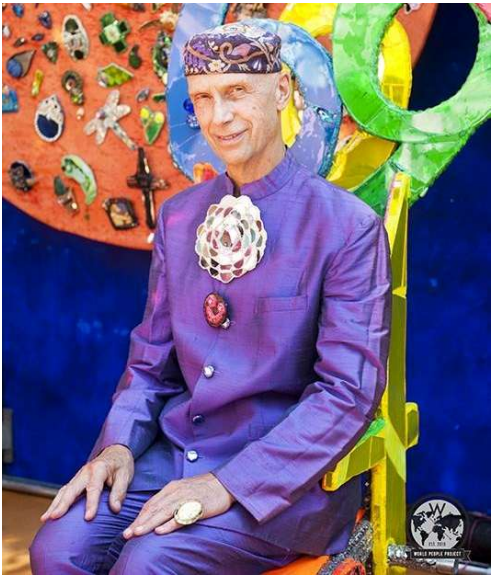


Rehearsing at Butlers Wharf

Andrew Logan

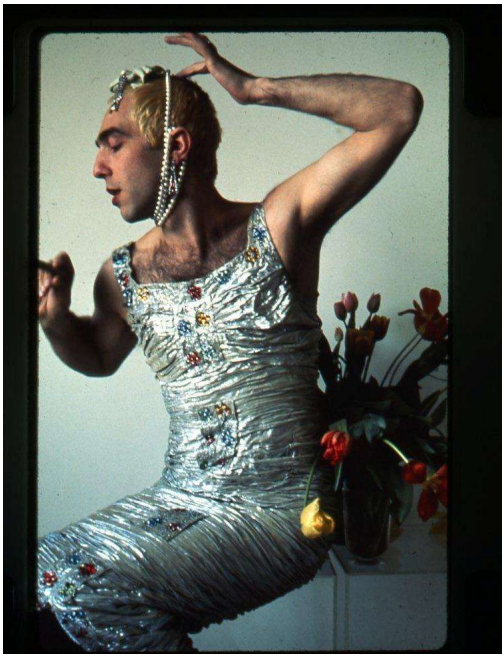
Andrew Logan lived at Butlers Wharf and was the founder of ‘Alternative Miss World’ events featuring drag and outlandish costumes (Logan pictured below in 1973)

Until recently he lived in a house opposite the Horseshoe Inn pub in Melior Street SE1



Derek Jarman

The 1975 Alternative Miss World, held at Butlers Wharf, was won by film maker Derek Jarman, who also lived there. Jarman was dressed as Miss Crepe Suzette with artist David Hockney as one of the judges.

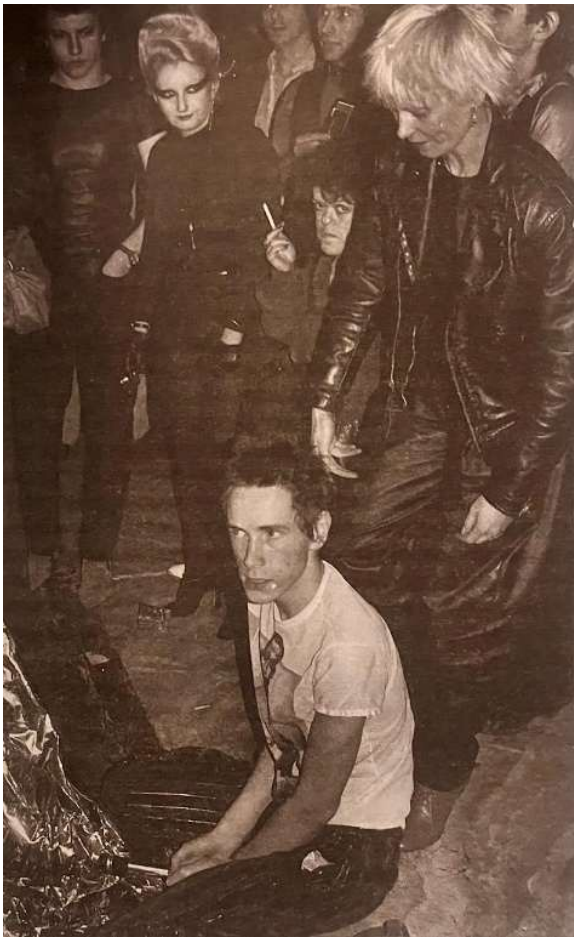


Jubilee

Jarman filmed some of his punk-themed movie Jubilee (1977) in a film set built in Butlers Wharf.

Above: Jordan and Adam Ant in ‘Jubilee’. Adam and the Ants played gigs at both Andew Logan’s and Jarman’s studios in Butlers Wharf in 1977.

Punk at Butlers Wharf



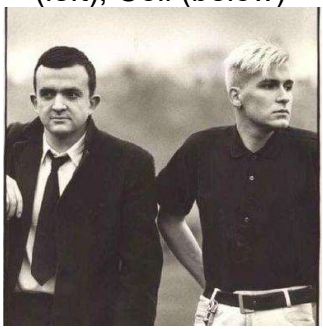
Jarman and Logan were both famed for their wild parties at Butlers Wharf, sometimes featuring early gigs by punk bands. The Sex Pistols gig at Logan's studio in 1976 is pictured left with Vivienne Westwood standing behind singer John Lydon.

Siouxsie and the Banshees also played at Butlers Wharf in 1977 while the video for 'Identity' by X-Ray Spex was filmed in Logan's studio.

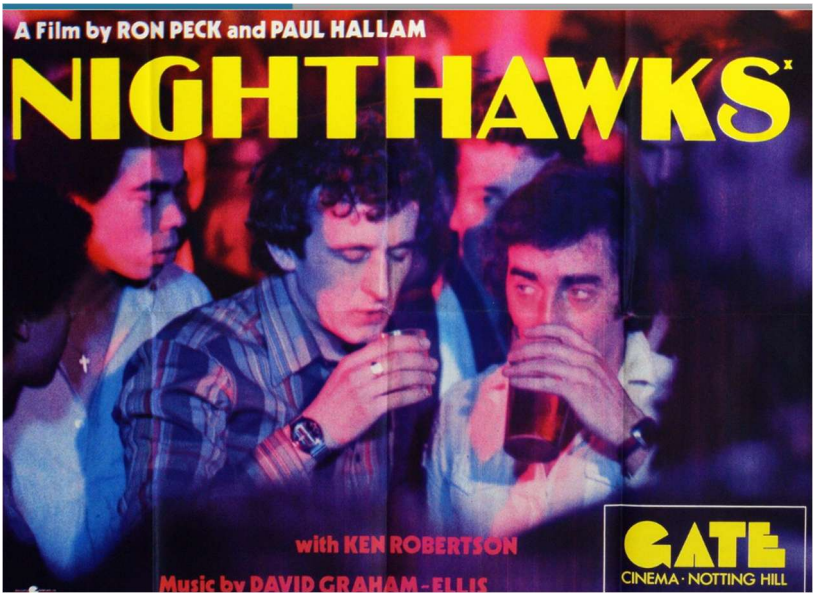
Throbbing Gristle and Coil

Jarman collaborated with industrial band Throbbing Gristle (TG), who soundtracked his film ‘In the Shadow of the Sun’, and the group Coil (featuring ex -TG’s Peter Christopherson) who contributed music to his film ‘Blue’ about living and dying with AIDS. TG played at Butlers Wharf in 1979 – queue shown below

Throbbing Gristle (left); Coil (below)



Nighthawks and Sebastiene



Ron Peck's 1978 film 'Nighthawks' has been described the 'first major British gay film' set in contemporary times. Its nightclub scene was filmed in Jarman's Butlers Wharf studio.

Jarman's own Roman-themed Sebastiene (1976) was mostly filmed in Italy with Latin dialogue but a key party scene featuring dancer Lindsay Kemp was filmed in Logan's studio at Butlers Wharf.

Elephant Man

John Hurt and David Lynch on set of the Elephant Man (1980), partially filmed at Shad Thames.

The Tooley St area history walk took place on 4 September 2025.

[Front cover images, clockwise from top left: Derek Jarman, Newtrament (1983 electro track); Anne Bean; Innovation flyer]